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ABSTRACT

The result of a week long visit to the ARTTC program, this report identifies program strengths and weaknesses. The basic premise behind this 4 year college program is identified as "belief that persons native to a community and trained in that community are best prepared to teach in it", since these students learn while they teach in 10 rural Native villages, though their course work is derived from Anchorage (University of Alaska and Alaska Methodist University). Evidence of the need for ARTTC is attributed to increasing demand for localization of Alaska's 4 entity educational system (the Alaska State Operated School System; the Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools; city schools; and borough schools) and demand for Native rather than white teachers, since traditionally there have been few trained Native teachers, the ARTTC program having only recently (1972) graduated 23 of its 54 participants. Weak and sometimes unrelated education courses, the distant professor (Anchorage), and communication and cost problems are cited as program weaknesses. Program strengths are identified as use of: a cross-cultural curriculum, a community based program, an external degree design built around a learning team, and a combination of Native and non-Native peoples working together in small learning groups based on the team leader role. (JC)

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"WHALE HUNTING IS DIFFERENT THERE"

A Report on the Alaska Rural Teacher Training Corps (ARTTC)

by

Alan Gartner

[1974]

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Introduction

The highway into Fairbanks from the airport is littered with the detritus of contemporary America -- a MacDonalds, a Pizza Hut and a Dairy Queen. Indeed, from outward appearances there is little to distinguish Fairbanks from a small, if expensive (milk at $2.50 a gallon, a shave for $5.25, a breakfast of bacon and eggs for $3.75) midwestern city. Anchorage, the state's largest city, is even more like the "Lower 48."

And then there is Point Hope, an Eskimo village of about 350 persons, located some 250 miles north of the Artic Circle. Here, too, there are surprising juxtapositions -- the Native sled that takes people to the whaling camp eight to ten miles out on the pack ice is pulled not by a team of dogs but by a Skidoo!

Any consideration of teacher training efforts in Alaska* must take into account the geographic, cultural and political context in which they occur. First, there is the sheer size of the state: with the best of luck in plane connections, it would take two weeks or more to get to all ten of the ARTTC sites because roads are simply not present at most sites. Then there

*For reasons based largely upon size and convenience, in Alaska the Career Opportunities Program (COP) and the Teacher Corps are operated together, as part of a single Alaska Rural Teacher Training Corps (ARTTC). For participants, called "Interns" in the Teacher Corps jargon, it is a single four-year program. Administratively, COP funding supports participants for the first two years and Teacher Corps supports them for the last two. The federal grant sources, administratively handled through the Teacher Corps, are sizeably supplemented by state funds, viz. $271,000 from Teacher Corps, $162,000 from COP, and $503,000 from the state in 1973-74.

is the severe climate: while the temperature at Anchorage and the two southeastern sites rarely goes below -20° F, at the other sites, temperatures as low as -60° F are not uncommon. No program can operate in Alaska without nearly constant consideration of these geographic and climatic conditions: for much of the year, in many sites, life-sustaining functions demand an inordinate amount of time. Keeping warm, getting water and food, maintaining health are matters which consume great energy for much of the year.

No short document (nor the product of a short visit*) can adequately describe the cultural variety of the state, which embraces differing groups (Eskimos, Indians, Aleuts,** and whites), differing languages (both between and within the groups), differing customs and practices, differences in the use of and dependence upon technology, as well as differences in the relative influence of "the Outside." (This term and the "Lower 48" generally are used interchangeably.)

Politically, two intricately interwoven developments are taking place simultaneously: the mineral (largely but not exclusively oil)

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*This report is the result of a weeklong visit to the ARTTC program, reading of various program documents, and countless conversations with the program's staff, participants, public school and community people. While in no way responsible for either my errors in understanding or the conclusions drawn, several of the ARTTC people deserve special thanks for their help -- "Mick" Murphy, Ray Barnhardt, Bob Rozzoni, and Freda Russell.

**All ten ARTTC sites are in Native villages -- six in villages predominantly Indian (Athabaskan, Tsimpian and Tlingit), and four Eskimo.

development, particularly in the North Slope (of the Brooks Range) region, and the land settlements involving various Native groups.* Both developments involve sharp, no doubt irreversible, changes in Alaskan life, urban and Native. They are accompanied by a shift in local governmental organization. Increasing authority is being exercised by "borough" governments, and local, Native controlled corporations. Most of the twelve Native regional corporations, whose main function relates to the land claims, have set up non-profit corporations to provide social services beyond that rendered by public agencies.

As in the larger political arena, the structure and power relationships of public education are changing. Four separate entities operate public schools: there is the Alaskan State-Operated School System (ASOSS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools, city schools, and borough schools. More and more of the first two are changing to the last two -- that is, schools are becoming more locally controlled. And as control shifts to the local level -- and "local" must be understood in the Alaskan context, e.g., the North Slope Borough extends for nearly a thousand miles -- there is increasing involvement of local people on the policy boards, and in the "bush" this means Native people. However, schools are operated almost exclusively by whites.

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*Under the 1971 Native Claims Act, Alaskan Natives have a two percent stake in proceeds from mineral resources. Natives are entitled to claim some 40 million acres and are to receive payment of $962.5 million.

The first ARTTC graduates in 1972 nearly doubled the number of Native teachers in the state -- from seven to 12, and with 22 Native graduates expected this spring and summer, the number of Native teachers will be almost five times the 1972 figure! No single piece of datum makes so clear the desperate need for a program such as ARTTC.*

*In addition to the ARTTC students, the two universities in the program (University of Alaska and Alaska Methodist University), the state's only four-year institutions, will each graduate one Native student in education this year! The planned establishment of a "land claims college" by the Tanana Chiefs Conference, in cooperation with the "University Without Walls" component of Antioch College, should, once it is in operation, sharply increase the now dismal output of Native (in this instance, Athabaskan Indian) college graduates.

Point Hope

Situated on a barren spit of land jutting out into the Chukchi Sea, Point Hope is the northernmost ARTTC site.

All five "Interns" are Eskimos and Natives of Point Hope. Three of them are women. With the hiring of three program graduates this spring, the Point Hope schools (enrollment 111) will have their first licensed Native teachers.

There is no sure way to know the full effect of this development but a few items suggest some of the potential.

--The present teachers (with one exception) live in special housing called "the Quarters" (shades of British India!).

--None of the present teachers have been in Point Hope more than four years, and within a week of the close of school, all had left.

--None speak the Native language.

Indeed, the ARTTC team leader (and his wife) are the only white persons who live in the village, get their own water, tend to their own fuel, as all these necessities of life are provided for residents of "the Quarters."

Unlike other COP projects, the ARTTC participants are not public school paraprofessionals with career training and education built into their jobs. Rather, they are full-time college students, receiving a stipend, who are distant from the college campuses and frequently use both the community and the public school as a learning resource. (The college program itself will be discussed below.)

Village life is overwhelmingly dominated by the realities of geography, climate, and a still largely hunting and gathering economy. With the breaking of the ice in mid-spring, almost all of the men and many of the women and older boys move to whaling camps out on the pack ice. Along with seals, caribou and reindeer fish and picked berries, the whale meat and skin called "muktuk" (and blubber for oil) provide a central part of the Eskimos' diet. Although the pack ice breaks in the spring, and there is nearly constant sunlight for four months, snow is on the ground for all but a few weeks and there is no crop growing season.

Access in and out of Point Hope is only by plane, and all goods arrive on the "Otter" or the twice-a-year ship.

Tanana

Nearly one and a half times the size of Point Hope, and 500 miles further south, Tanana is sharply different. Primarily an Athabaskan Indian community, the presence of a Federal Aviation Administration facility and a Public Health Service hospital, as well as its relative ease of access to Fairbanks (four or five hour-long flights a day), makes Tanana far more diverse than Point Hope. For example, of the six ARTTC participants there, three are Eskimo, two Indian, and one white.

The state-operated school is equipped much like one in the "Lower 48," except the facilities are more modern than most -- VTR equipment, modular space arrangements, and even a large movie-size popcorn machine. Again, all of the teachers are white.

While hardly benign (winter temperatures go below -60° F), the climate is significantly less hostile than at Point Hope. By mid-May, the ice has broken on the Yukon and Tanana Rivers, and a month later a short but highly productive (again there are some 18 hours of sunlight) growing season begins. The economy is far more cash-based; indeed, the Tanana Chiefs Conference finds it necessary to operate a "Survival School" in order to teach Indian children forgotten skills in weir building, canoe making, trapping, etc.

In some ways, Tanana, especially in contrast with Point Hope, is highly affected by "the Outside." There are two stores instead of one, four churches instead of one, two airlines and numerous private planes, a PHS hospital instead of three health aides, several miles

of road instead of none, many trucks and cars instead of none, etc. On the other hand, it is an Athabaskan village: staples of the home diet consist of what can be caught, trapped or killed (although the school menu is unfortunately like any "Lower 48" school), many older people do speak the Indian languages, death is celebrated with a potlatch.

The ARTTC Program

There are currently 54 participants in the ARTTC program; there have been 23 graduates. With the exception of three whites, the Interns are Native and are equally divided among Eskimo and Indians, men and women. Their average age is about 27, and two-thirds are married.

For the most part the program takes place in ten Native villages,* some as far as 1,500 miles away from the university base at Fairbanks. In each village, along with the Interns is a Team Leader. They -- nine men and a woman, all white, usually have been school teachers -- are the key program staff.

The students (and it is most accurate to think of the Interns as college students) receive the bulk of their course work while in the villages. While not subject area experts, the Team Leaders are most of all facilitators of the college course work. They act as links with the college professors at the University of Alaska and Alaska Methodist University, serve as discussion leaders in frequent meetings concerning course work, act as resource persons to amplify and explain the material from the universities, participate in the assessment of some of the students' work, act as counselor and advisor; in addition, they provide the structural linkage with the local schools and to the Anchorage headquarters of ARTTC.

*Metlakatla, Tsimpsian Indian, 6 Interns; Angoon, Tlingit Indian, 5 Interns; Ft. Yukon, Athabaskan Indian, 3 Interns; Tanana, Athabaskan, 6 Interns; Nulato, Athabaskan, 5 Interns; Nondalton, 4, Athabaskan, 4 Interns; Togiak, Eskimo, 6 Interns; Bethel, Eskimo, 7 Interns; Noorvik, Eskimo, 5 Interns; and Point Hope, Eskimo, 5 Interns.

Course work at a distance from the campus is at best a complicated business. This is made all the more difficult given the great distances and severe communications problems of Alaska, the heterogeneity of the student population in terms of quality of their previous education, their facility with English (in which all courses are taught), their level of study skills, and, most important, problems at the level of the courses themselves. Some faculty, notably the University of Alaska's Coordinator Ray Barnhardt, have made special efforts both to know the students and the special problems of off campus learning. But, too often, the courses seem to be the same old stuff shipped to the "bush" without care or concern for the realities of the student population or learning situation. While the irregularities of mail delivery complicate the problem, lateness on the part of faculty in producing course materials makes the students' burden unnecessarily greater.

As few of the professors have much direct sense of living and teaching in a Native village, too often the course work makes little sense. But even the absence of such experience is no excuse for a course in "Genetics" where the only recommended readings concerned with the application to learning are Jensen and Herrnstein.

The courses with an anthropological bent seem to be best. Perhaps it is because the professors are disciplined to look with care at the people. Also, the anthropological approach allows for both interesting "field work" in the local villages and comparative study of Native and other cultures.

The education methods courses seem weak, although perhaps no more so than the general low level of such courses elsewhere. However, the less than full involvement of the ARTTC participants in the local schools also is a constraint. Clearly, the program is by its very existance a threat (and properly so, it seems) to the business-as-usual attitude of the schools, be they ASOSS, BIA, or borough-operated. At one level, of course, there is the problem of the local people, the ARTTC participants, replacing the present white teachers. And at a larger level, the program is a challenge to the outside cultural ethos of the schools, largely divorced from the local community and its culture.* As Charles Ray, Dean at the University of Alaska, said, "It's Ocean Hill-Brownsville, North."

In each village, a group with a person representing each of seven "interests" has been formed. These are the representatives of the local government, the school board, parents, teachers, the Interns, the building principal, and the Team Leader. It was this group which selected participants and which plays an assessment role vis-a-vis the work of the Team Leader and performance of the Interns, and makes recommendations to the university, which are used as a basis for its recommendation to the state board regarding teacher certification.

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*It is interesting, and indicative, that at one site it was an ARTTC team member who recruited older people from the village to teach the children Native songs and dances.

"Whale Hunting Is Different There"

No single factor is more important to the economy of a coastal Eskimo village than the whale hunt. Complex customs and practices have developed. For example, there is the question of who is to be the captain of a crew; this is hereditary in some villages, based upon ownership of a boat and equipment in others, or possession of special skills in yet others. In some villages, family members are on the same crew; in others, they are scattered among several crews. The protocol for dividing up the whale is strict: a set portion for the crew that made the first hit, for the crew that killed it, for the captain, for those who do the butchering and cutting up, for others. How the portions are allocated varies from village to village. And, in some villages, portions (the flukes, for example) are set aside for a special feast; in others, they are eaten immediately.

The point is that each Eskimo village is both separate and different. While there is much in common with other villages, there is much that is unique. And, of course, Eskimo villages as a group are drastically different from "the Outside" -- be it Indian villages or white cities.

A basic premise of the ARTTC program is that persons native to a community, and trained in that community (the respective importance of these two features is not clearly set) are best prepared to teach in it. Granting that point -- and there seems to be some evidence from the ARTTC program and others to substantiate it -- there is a special dilemma. Does the double emphasis on localism -- people from a

particular village, trained in it -- lead to parochialism? Or put another way, will a person born and trained in Noorvik be able to teach in Bethel?

Of course, at a different level, there is the question of whether someone born in Scarsdale, who attended Wellesley, can teach in Harlem? Or, as is the case with most of the teachers now at the schools in the Native community, can someone born and educated in the "Lower 48" teach effectively in a Native school?

ARTTC is mindful of this issue. The heavy emphasis upon anthropology seems designed to give students a perspective on cultural differences, and the "field work" assignments provide tools for studying a new community. And a proposed redesign offers the opportunity for students to spend a semester or two in a school outside of the village.

Indeed, the plans for the future envision a considerable expansion of ARTTC's role and some shift in its mode of operation. A series of regional centers are planned, each staffed by an "outstationed" faculty member of the university. The centers will be concerned not only with those full-time students in the villages seeking a baccalaureate degree, but also with in-service training for paraprofessionals and master's level programs for teachers. Bringing the university, in the presence of regional center directors, closer to the students, the design gives up the Team Leader role in the villages. The costs of the Team Leader are very great; with an average of five students in

each village, they amount to about $16,000 per student over the course of the four years. This plus the other program costs makes ARTTC an expensive program. Cost, of course, must be balanced against return, and the return of other programs has been slim. For example, as recently as 1968, fewer than two percent of the Native students who were enrolled in on-campus higher education programs graduated. Currently, the rate is estimated at 10 to 15 percent. In simple comparative terms, ARTTC -- with a holding rate of about 85 percent -- could carry a six- to eightfold greater cost and still stack up in cost per graduate.

But the effectiveness equation is not so simply measured. The benefits to Native children of Native teachers trained in their own village is not a calculation we know how to carry out. And, at a time when the demand for trained Native leadership is high and expanding rapidly, and the supply meager, ARTTC-trained personnel are a precious commodity. For example, two program completers are now mayors of their villages -- Kotzebue and Fort Yukon -- while many others serve in planning and administrative capacities for Native corporations.

Conclusion

What ARTTC has done is extraordinary. In the face of enormous problems, not the least of which was the belief that Natives could not be successful students, the program has been launched, carried forth, and is now producing a crop of high quality graduates. These persons add significantly to the pool of Native leadership at a time of desperate need.

The program provides examples of various sorts which are appropriate, if not for direct replication, surely for careful study, viz.

--a cross-cultural curriculum,

--a community-based education program,

--an external degree design built around a learning team,

--a meld of Native and non-Native with the intent to stop the overwhelming of the former by the latter,

--a design for small group learning based around the Team Leader role.

Most of all, of course, it is a true human resource development program. While the new expanded mission of ARTTC is responsive to real needs in the state, care must be taken to assure that its initial mission -- to recruit, prepare and graduate Native teachers trained in their villages -- is not left unfulfilled. While the cost is steep, the benefits, for adults and children, Native community and larger society, more than justify the effort.